

in life, we take snapshots

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It's always the little moments that mean the most. A series of unrelated drabbles.

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in life, we take snapshots

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underpaid babysitters

title: competent child psychologists and underpaid babysitters

notes: That's it. That's the title. I've recently started working as a counselor for a summer camp and while it's fun, the kids can be quite a handful. Which thus inspired this drabble of sorts. In which Houka is a brat. And Ryuko kind of, sort of, not really, questions her choices.

notes 2: This was already posted on my tumblr, but I think it's time I got around to posting it here as well. This is going to be a collection of unrelated drabbles, most of which will probably be AUs.

Ryuko whirls around at the sudden sound of a splash, hands still stained white with sunscreen as it hovers over Mako's arm. She does a quick head count, running through the names of every camper assigned to her, as she wipes her sunscreen stained hands on her own arms. It doesn't take long to figure out that Nonon is missing, if only because of the halo of pink hair that appears on the surface of the water as she sputters for air.

Her entire group runs over to the edge of the swimming pool, staring wide-eyed and amazed, Omiko tugging on her pant leg and asking why Nonon was allowed to swim when she couldn't. Ryuko answers absentmindedly that Nonon wasn't swimming, eyes fervently searching the area around for the lifeguard stand, knowing that Uzu is on duty.

Not finding any signs of him, Ryuko's ready to jump into the pool herself. Her whistle, shoes, and socks are tossed to the side and she's about to dive into the waters when Uzu surfaces, Nonon safe under his arms.

Ryuko releases a relieved sigh, grabbing two of the towels from the stack by her feet. She rushes over to the edge, and after asking all her campers to move back, helps Uzu pull Nonon back onto land and wraps one of the towels around her shoulders, leaving the other for him to take.

"Houka pushed me in!" Nonon whines through chattering teeth, arms held straight out as she allows Ryuko to wipe off the water.

"He did?" Ryuko asks, gently pulling her hair out of the pigtails they had been tied in to get at her hair.

"Yes!" Nonon confirms adamantly, glaring at the bespectacled boy standing behind Ryuko.

With a long-suffering sigh, Ryuko shifts on her toes so that she's still able to dry Nonon whilst reprimanding Houka. "Houka, did you push Nonon into the pool?"

His eyes flicker over towards the still fuming girl and, without any visible remorse, says, "Yeah."

"Well, why did you?"

"Because she was talking too much."

"Because she was - " Ryuko repeats incredulously. She shakes her head, cutting herself short, and brings up a hand to rub tiredly at the bridge of her nose. Turning to Uzu, she has him take care of Nonon so that she can focus her entire attention on Houka. "We don't push people into pools for *talking too much*, Houka."

He purses his lips. "But she wouldn't shut up."

"That's still no reason to push someone," Ryuko chastises, chancing a glance over at Nonon. Uzu's drying her hair and she doesn't look as mad as before, which lifts a heavy weight off Ryuko's mind. "We ask nicely, alright?"

"But she wouldn't shut up," he repeats and Ryuko suppresses the urge to bang her head against the nearest hard surface. She's trying so hard not to swear, and she's not admitting to anything, but a couple might have slipped through unawares.

"We ask nicely and we do not resort to pushing," Ryuko says once more, firmly and with no more room for arguments.

Almost a little reluctantly, he nods, and Ryuko takes it as it is. She knows that Houka's not repentant in the least and no amount of reprimanding will change that. But she's not going to let him off easy. She has him sit on one of the lounge chairs and states, quite firmly, that he is to stay until she decides he can leave.

Omiko tugs once again on Ryuko's pant leg, asking if they could go swimming already. After double checking for sunscreen and helping Shiro out of his shirt, Ryuko agrees with the condition that they stay in sight, and soon enough, she's left alone with Uzu, the towels, and a sulking Houka.

This is one of those times where she severely questions her choice in becoming a camp counselor. She loves working with kids. They can be adorable and sweet when they want to, but then there are those (like Houka, she thinks a little bitterly) who just test her patience.

She can feel her muscles aching and her feet hurt from standing all day and all she wants to do is sleep, but she has to keep an eye on the kids. She cricks her neck and reaches a hand up to rub at her sore muscles, trying to work out the kinks, and thinks that it might be time for a massage.

Uzu pushes aside her hand, replacing them with his own, and rubs soothing circles against her shoulders, working at the knots that have built up in the past week. "How're you feeling?"

"Tired," she murmurs, leaning into his ministrations. "Sore."

"Yeah, I can tell," he huffs amusedly, thumbs digging into a particularly painful lump of muscle. She tenses in pain and he immediately apologizes by returning to rubbing circles and gentle kneading.

Her kids are all splashing around in the shallow end of the pool, except for Nonon who's making her way towards the wading pool. Ryuko moves, Uzu following after, still working her knots, until she's positioned between the two, as well as keeping Houka in view.

"Well, think of happy things," Uzu offers.

Ryuko tilts her head to the side as an indication that she's listening, her eyes flickering between the two pools. "And what would that be?"

"For one, today's Friday."

Ryuko hums and nods.

"And for another, I'm taking you out on a date tonight."

"Oh, you are, are you?"

"Yep," he answers, popping the 'p'. "Dress nice, but nothing fancy."

"Oh?" she hums, moving away from Uzu's hands when Shiro comes running to her, crying about how Mako got water up his nose and how much it hurts. "Not going to tell me where you're taking me?"

He grins. "That'd ruin the surprise."

"You know I love your surprises," she teases, leading Shiro over to the towels. "But this date's not going to happen if your supervisor catches you slacking."

They both glance at the empty lifeguard chair and he curses the fact that he's on duty. She shoots him a reprimanding glare, head tilting towards the kid beside her. Thankfully, Shiro's too busy nursing his burning nose to notice Uzu's slip up.

"I'll pick you up at eight?" he asks.

"Eight," she agrees, angling her head so that he can kiss her cheek before returning to his post. He smiles, giddy and excited, and waves at her the moment he settles his butt onto the seat of his chair. She rolls her eyes, but waves back nonetheless, her own smile gracing her lips.

She can't wait.

anything you can do i can do better

title: anything you can do i can do better

notes: Watching *Bones* and *CSI* and *Criminal Minds* often lead to wanting to write agent!UzuRyuko. I may or may not turn this into a full length fic, but for the time being, enjoy this drabble.

"What did you do that for?" Ryuko grouses as she strips off her bulletproof vest and holsters her two handguns, all the while glaring at Uzu. "You stole my kill."

Uzu grins mockingly and changes out of his bloodstained shirt into the extra one he keeps in his trunk. "What are you talking about? That was totally my kill."

"Please," Ryuko scoffs. "If you hadn't bust through those doors he would have already been dead. From *my* shot."

"Whatever," he replies dismissively, slipping into driver's seat. He waits until Ryuko slides in, eyeing the blood distastefully but saying nothing of it, to say, "It was my shot that killed him. Therefore, my kill. Fifty-five, forty-nine."

"What? No way. Fifty-four, fifty."

"Fifty-five."

"Fifty-four."

"I killed him," he practically whines. He waves a hand out the window at one of the other officers and signals that he's leaving first. Getting the okay, he drives out of the alley and heads for the office.

"But I shot him first."

"But I killed him."

"But I shot him. Hey, do you still have my spare clothes at your place?"

"Yeah. But we gotta stop by the office first."

Ryuko hums and leans back against the plush of the car seat, picking dried blood off her fingers. "So long as I get a shower. And I still say it's fifty-four to fifty."

add a dash of whipped cream

title: add a dash of whipped cream

notes: This time it's a coffee shop AU. Because why not.

Sanageyama Uzu would like to say that he's not living out a coffee shop cliché. He'd like to say that he's not in love with a customer, that he's not leaving her stupid little love notes on her coffee cup, that they don't flirt at the cash register. He'd like to say that they are nothing more than passing acquaintances who happen to meet from time to time in a coffee shop.

Except that he is. Living out his own coffee shop romance, that is.

It starts off normal enough and he thinks it might just be a passing fancy that'll disappear the more he sees her, but it doesn't. His feelings grow stronger the more he meets her and the more he gets to know her. It gets to the point where he finally admits to himself that, yeah, he just might be in love with this girl.

The most pathetic part is that he's taken to writing notes on her cups. Not love notes, because that's sappy and he doesn't do sap, but things like "have a nice day" and "sup brah". Except he doesn't, you know, actually write, "sup brah".

But today, of all days, he decides to take a leap of courage and writes "I like you" on her cup.

He hands it off to Nonon before he can change his mind and scribble it out. He knows Nonon's seen his message because she's wearing the most shit eating grin he's ever seen from her as she flounces off to make the drink. He resists the urge to bang his head against the counter.

The whirl of the machine alerts him to the fact that Ryuko is that much closer to seeing his stupid little love note and it makes him a very nervous. Someone put him out of his misery, please.

He keeps his eyes averted when the drink is finished and Nonon calls out Ryuko's name because he's a coward and he doesn't want to see her reaction. What if she laughs or thinks it's a joke? What if she doesn't feel the same way? There's a lot that can go wrong here and he thinks he's having a mental breakdown in the middle of work.

"Me too."

He jerks his head up and Ryuko is standing before him with a small smile and maybe there's a hint of a blush but he could be deluding himself because there's no way she just said -

"I like you, too."

She presses something into his hand. When he looks, he finds a café napkin with her number scrawled across it and the goofiest smile appears on his face.

So maybe he's living his own coffee shop romance. He's okay with that.

havin' such a good time

title: reminiscin' this n' that n' havin' such a good time

notes: I was going to make all the Disney and not Disney songs hidden references but then where's the fun in that. Uzu is a dork, of course he'd know all the songs. Who am I kidding, they're both dorks.

"Let me be your wings -"

Ryuko laughs as Uzu removes the book from her hands and gently tugs her to her feet, swinging the two of them around in slow and easy circles. "What are you doing?"

"What does it look like?" he replies cheekily, twirling her under his arm. "Let me be your only love. Let me take you far beyond the stars!"

Ryuko only laughs louder and harder when his voice cracks trying to reach the last note. "New song. New song."

"Let's get down to business -"

"Romantic."

Uzu continues to twirl her around the living room. "Um - oh! Can you feel the love tonight?"

"I can," Ryuko answers amusedly.

"The peace the evening brings."

"Mm."

"Hm. You'll be in my heart. Yeah," he belts out and Ryuko pushes him good-naturedly on the chest, still laughing. "From this day on, now and forevermo~re!"

"What about -"

"Yes, you gotta appreciate the lady."

"Not what I was thinking, but that'll work. Keep going."

"A girl worth fighting fo~r!" He purses his lips in thought.

"Unexpected, what you did to my heart."

"Anything else?"

They stop spinning and Uzu winds his arms around her to pull her close. She follows, her own arms resting loosely around his waist. His smile is no longer mischievous, but instead tender, and he murmurs softly, "If I never knew you, if I never felt this love."

Ryuko hums softly and lifts her head to give him a playful smile. "I have one." She waits until he's looking inquisitively at her to say, as teasingly as possible, "You know you wanna kiss the girl."

Uzu lets out a huffy sort of laugh and as he leans in, says, "That I do."

route 66

title: we'd be driving down route 66 if you knew where you were going

notes: It's not a road trip if you don't get lost, that's what I always say.

"We're lost."

Uzu scoffs, fingers tapping impatiently on the steering wheel as he stares resolutely forward. "We. Are not lost."

"Then where are we?" Ryuko challenges, eyes never leaving the map in her hands. Her head tilts, finger tracing along the red lines as she tries to find their location.

"A town."

Ryuko hums disbelievingly. "Right. And what's the town called?"

"Uh -"

"Admit it. We're lost."

"We are not lost!" Uzu repeats adamantly.

Ryuko sighs agitatedly and runs a weary hand down her face. "Just - pull over and ask someone for directions to the highway."

"No. We are not lost, therefore we do not need to ask for directions."

"Uzu, that was the fourth right you've taken in the last five minutes."

"No it's not."

Ryuko makes a noise somewhere between a groan and a growl and bangs her head against the window. "See that shop? This is the third time we've passed that shop."

"Wha - I've never seen that shop before!"

With a frustrated noise, Ryuko gives up and just settles back into the car seat, map pushed aside. Might as well catch some sleep while Uzu drives around town pretending like he knows where he's going. Who knows how it's going to take him to find the highway.

She's just starting to drift off when Uzu's voice cuts in through the haze.

"Okay. I think we're lost."

shameless friends

title: shameless friends are well meaning friends (or they're just shameless)

notes: All I can say is, beware meddlesome friends.

For the third time this week alone, Uzu finds himself back at the same restaurant, with the same waitress he had the last two times and all the other times before. If he were to be completely honest with himself, she's the reason he keeps coming back. But he's not and so he keeps telling himself it's because the food is great. (It is, but it's not the reason he returns.)

Uzu stares after Ryuko as she leaves with their order and he can't help the soft smile that graces his lips nor can he seem to stop the wistful little sigh that escapes. A snort from across the table brings his eyes forward again and he finds Nonon shaking, her face buried in Houka's shoulder while he simply smirks openly at him.

"What?" he asks, slightly miffed.

"I think I get it," Nonon says as she lifts her head, her smirk matching her boyfriend's.

"Get what?"

"You have the hots for Ryuko," Nonon states with little to no tact. "That's why you keep coming back."

"I do not!" he denies vehemently. "I mean, she's -"

Uzu cuts himself off sharply when Ryuko returns with their drinks and appetizers and he adopts his most innocent expression possible. The smile she shoots him as she sets his drink down gives him a warm feeling.

"So, Ryuko," Nonon says, her tone of voice sickeningly sweet. It's almost as effective as dumping a bucket of cold water because the warm feeling is gone like *that* . "Are you dating?"

Ryuko blinks at the sudden question and Uzu just wants to sink into the floor because his friends (read: Nonon) are shameless. "Er - no, not at the moment."

"Is there anyone you're interested in?"

"I - no?"

Nonon hums and shares a look with Houka, one Uzu wishes he didn't catch because it makes him just that much more embarrassed and nervous.

"So, let's say Uzu were to ask you out then." So damn shameless he's considering ending their friendship. Uzu wants to bang his head on the table so badly.

Ryuko arches an eyebrow. "Is he planning on asking me out?"

"Are you?" Houka inquires amusedly. Uzu merely glares.

"My answer would depend on whether or not he plans on asking me himself," Ryuko answers lightly as she places the last of the appetizers onto the table. "Your entrees will be out soon. If you need anything else, feel free to call me over. Enjoy."

She escapes before Nonon can continue her line of questioning and Uzu's left to deal with the couple before him until he decides that going to the bathroom would be a wonderful idea.

He bumps into Ryuko on her way out of the kitchens and his face flares up because there's no way he can forget the mortification that was the last five minutes. He stammers out an apology of some sort and he quickly forgets what he's talking about when she laughs lightly and reassures him that it was fine.

"Your friends aren't exactly subtle, are they?" she quips and it eases the embarrassment in him.

"Not exactly," he agrees.

"Well, I kind of have to get back to work -" Uzu just notices the tray of food she has in hand and moves out of the way, "- but for the record, my answer is yes."

It takes a moment for it all to sink in and when it does, she's already gone but it doesn't stop the euphoric smile that stretches across his lips. He may not have asked directly, but that "yes" is enough to give him the courage to actually ask himself.

But he'll do it when he's not with Nonon and Houka. Just to be safe.

you can only be one thing: a fish

title: with gills and a fin you can only be one thing: a fish

notes: Watching *The Little Mermaid* put me in a mermaid mood.

"You're a mermaid?"

"We prefer the term mermen, actually. See, no boobs. Therefore, mer *man* ."

Ryuko stares long and hard at the mermaid - excuse her, *merman* - tangled in her fishing net, his fish tail flapping uselessly against the deck of her ship.

She always imagined mermaids as being strikingly beautiful but this in front of her is anything but. His arms are crossed disgruntledly across his chest and his still dripping hair is hanging like seaweed in front of his face. One of her hands comes up instinctively to rub weary circles at her temple as she tries to process the fact that she just reeled up a merman of all things.

"You know," Uzu intones dryly, "not that I don't like the net or anything -"

"Yeah, hold on," Ryuko says. "I'm still trying to wrap my mind around the fact that I pulled up a *merman* ."

His tail swishes along the deck, though it doesn't get very far due to the net. Ryuko takes the time to really look at him, from the wet sheen of his tail to the limited pearls that line his hair, and it finally seems to settle in her mind that this guy before is, indeed, a merman. If anything, the tail that she's staring at certainly doesn't disappear the longer she stares at it, so, she's assuming it's real.

Or maybe this is all a very lucid dream and she's actually still in bed. Yeah, that seems much more possible.

"The net?"

"Right." Ryuko kneels beside the man and gets to work on untangling him from the ropes. Except she keeps getting distracted by the scales of his tail and the way the sun glints off of them that it takes her nearly an hour to set him free. It doesn't help that he keeps grumbling and would flick his tail in her direction every time she gets sidetracked.

She seriously considers tangling him back up into the net and just tossing both of them overboard. She can afford a new net.

"There," she states proudly, heaving the net off of his tail. It swishes, the arcs wider and freer than before, and a pleased grin spread across his face.

He slithers across the deck like a snake and heaves himself onto the nearest barrel. He stares with stars in his eyes at the water momentarily before turning back around to face Ryuko. She arches a brow curiously.

"What?"

He produces a seashell from out of nowhere and holds it out for her to take. She just stares at it and he sighs before grabbing her hands and placing the item into her open palm.

"What is this?"

"As thanks," he explains simply.

"And you're giving me a seashell?"

"If you ever need anything, anywhere, just blow into it. I'll show up, I promise."

With that, he jumps back into the sea, leaving Ryuko alone on the deck with a pink seashell in hand. She stares down at it and wonders if that really just transpired. The seashell is real enough and there's still a puddle of water all across her deck.

"A merman," she murmurs disbelievingly to herself. "Really."

Not even a week later he ends up back on her deck, entangled once again in her nets, and she begrudgingly admits that she did indeed meet a merman. He gives her a sheepish smile and all she can do is sigh and shake her head as she strides across the ship's deck towards him.

"I think you need the seashell to call for help more than I do."

all's fair in love and war

title: all's fair in love and video games

notes: Video gaming brings the best and the worst out of all of us. I haven't touched a game console in months so everything is pretty much what I remember and if memory serves me right, then I don't remember much.

"What - dammit Ryuko! Stop attacking me!"

"Then get out of my way!"

"This was not why we put on friendly fire!"

"Get. Out. Of. The. Way, Uzu! I'm trying to attack Link!"

Fingers move furiously against the controls as Uzu and Ryuko focus on attacking and parrying their characters, keeping a keen watch on their stats. Uzu groans irritably as his character keeps getting caught in Ryuko's character line of fire. In the end, he gives up on trying to attack Ness and instead has Ike round on Samus, and with a quick counter, throws her character to the ground.

Ryuko grumbles and she attacks the buttons in quick succession, grinning wickedly as she watches Ike's health bar climb into the two hundreds whilst pretending to be attacking at Ness who's behind. Charging up a blast, she laughs a little too gleefully as both Ness and Ike fly off the screen and the voice announces the deaths of the two players.

"Ryuko!"

"Whoops, my bad," she apologizes, not sounding very sorry at all. Without any more distractions, she makes quick work of Link and grins when the large 'Game' signs flashes across the screen.

"Rematch," Uzu demands as the stats roll by. "No more teams. I demand a one-on-one."

"Sure," she easily agrees. "Get ready to get your ass whipped."

"Not likely."

They both choose new characters - Peach for Ryuko and Ganondorf for Uzu - and turn off the CPUs then ro-sham-bo when it's time to decide a stage. Ryuko wins and immediately heads for 'random' despite Uzu's grumblings about how Final Destination is a much better choice.

His grumblings turn darker when the game starts and Ryuko immediately lands a succession of hits on his character. When he tries to counterattack, his character just ends up tripping and he lets out a jumbled mess of what Ryuko thinks are curses. Whatever it is, it doesn't faze her one bit and she presses on with her attacks until Ganondorf is flying off the screen.

"Gah!"

"You gotta do better'n that if you wanna beat me," Ryuko taunts.

Uzu goes back to muttering but after a disastrous start, he begins picking up momentum and Ryuko finds that she's having a harder time keeping her own damage from climbing. It's a fierce battle now that no CPUs are getting in the way and they ultimately get down to one life each, neither one giving an inch. It's a long battle, but Ryuko comes out one top. She drops her controller and throws her hands up with pride and glee, smug grin in place when she looks at Uzu.

He stares back, a competitive glint lighting in his eyes and he utters but one word. "Rematch."

eyebrows, there should be two

title: eyebrows, there should be two!

notes : Because we all need a Miss Congeniality!AU.

Uzu huffs agitatedly and checks his watch, wondering what the hell was taking Mikisugi so long with Ryuko. He paces the length of the car, fingers running wearily through his bangs.

"What's taking her so long?"

Houka barely even glances up from his phone, fingers tapping rapidly in succession that makes Uzu think he's playing a game. "Stylists. Everything needs to be perfect."

"Well, whatever it is, can't it wait?" Uzu grouches, checking his watch once more. "The plane's about to take off."

The creaking of the large warehouse doors sliding open alerts them to the approaching mass of people. Mikisugi's leading the pack and he's strutting as though he's on a catwalk. Houka arched a curious eyebrow before giving a careless shrug, returning to the game on his phone.

"Finally," Uzu says, throwing his hands into the air. He rushes forward to usher them faster but pauses when they part like the Red Sea and Ryuko because visible. He's stunned at the way her dress hugs her body, accentuating the curves he didn't know existed. But what he's most surprised about is the fact that her hair's down and it looks knot free and is that make-up? "Woah. Matoi, is that you?"

"There's gunk on my face, I'm in a dress, I haven't slept in over forty-eight hours, I'm armed, and I'm starved. Don't mess with me," she growls, eyes staring resolutely forward. She stumbles, unused to such high heels, and lets out an undignified yelp as she goes down.

"Yep, that's her," Uzu remarks amusedly as she jumps right back up, hand smoothing down her ruffled hair.

"I'm good. I'm okay. Let's go."

in the game of love

title: in the game of love

notes: This was originally saved as *dating for the stupid* in my files. I don't even know, man. I don't even know. Have some date show fun.

"Welcome to the first ever Hounnoji Academy dating show, *Hounnoji Academy Love-Love Line* ! I am your host, Mankanshoku Mako, and today we have Sanageyama Uzu-senpai trying to find his perfect girl. On the other side of the curtains are three possible candidates: A-ko, B-ko, and C-ko! They have traveled from far and wide to get their chance -"

"Will you speed this up, I don't have all day."

"And that was B-ko, ladies and gentlemen! Doesn't she sound fabulous? I can't wait anymore so let's get this started. Why not have our three contestants say a little something about themselves? Let's start with A-ko."

"I am merely here as a favor to someone because she didn't want to come on alone."

"Well, still nice to have you here with us, A-ko! B-ko, what about you?"

"I can't believe you're actually doing this. This is so pathetic, even for you."

"Are you calling me pathetic, Jaku-"

"And C-ko! Your turn!"

"I promised my friend I would come on."

"Whew! What a couple of introductions right? So, Sanageyama-senpai, you have ten minutes to ask each contestant whatever questions you want and at the end, when the buzzer goes off, you choose who you think is most suited for you! And start!"

"Uh. Right. So, what's your idea of a good time?"

"Ha! Seriously? That's your question? Even Froggy could come up with something better."

"Can we just skip Jakuzu-"

"Her name is B-ko, Sanageyama-senpai!"

"Ugh. Can we skip *B-ko* ?"

"No. Now, A-ko, do you have an answer?"

"Drinking tea and looking out for my little sister."

"Mm! Family is very important! B-ko?"

"Taunting Monkey."

"Dammit Jakuzure!"

"B-ko, Sanageyama-senpai! You aren't supposed to know who they are! That completely destroys the idea of anonymity between you and the contestants! The mystery of it all is what makes it so romantic!"

"But it's Jakuzure!"

"Like I was trying to hide my identity."

"Let's hear C-ko's answer!"

"Hanging out with friends, being able to just relax, and having a good sparring match."

"Excellent answers from all of them! I think we're getting to know them all a lot better now, don't you agree, Sanageyama-senpai? Do you have another question?"

"What quality do you look for the most in a guy -"

"Do you, like, rip these questions off lame dating websites? Are you that desperate?"

"C-ko! I choose C-ko!"

"But, Sanageyama-senpai, you still have a lot of time left -"

"C-ko!"

"But -"

"I am not choosing Jakuzure and I'm pretty sure A-ko is Satsuki-sama. C-ko!"

"Like I want you to choose me, Monkey!"

"Okay! It seems as though Sanageyama-senpai has just made the fastest choice ever made on *Hounnoji Academy Love-Love Line* ! And he's chosen C-ko! Will C-ko please step out from behind the curtains? And it's Ryuko-chan! Congratulations to Sanageyama-senpai and Ryuko-chan for finding love here on *Hounnoji Academy Love-Love Line* ! I'm your host, Mankanshoku Mako, and tune in next time where we help Inumuta Houka-senpai find his girl!"

line your hearts in a row

title: line your hearts in a row

notes: It's always the season for conversation hearts.

Ryuko stares down at the candy heart sitting innocently on her pillow, accompanied by a green post-it note. Picking it up, she reads the fine print of the heart and, despite herself, smiles at the *Hi Love* that is etched there.

Popping the sweet into her mouth, she turns her attention to the post-it.

Welcome home! I have a surprise for you. Just follow the trail of candy hearts.

It's not signed but Ryuko can recognize the handwriting anywhere. She's seen it grace the refrigerator and other countless post-it notes that have littered the apartment.

Glancing around, she looks for another candy heart and spots two more in the direction of the bedroom door. She wonders idly how she had missed them as she pads across the carpeted floor, picking each one up on the way. She flips both around on the palm of one hand and spots *My Girl* on one and *For You* on the other. There's no accompanying post-it this time around.

Stepping out into the hall, she first looks to the right then to the left and spots a trail of about five leading through the living area towards the kitchen. Amused and admittedly more than a little curious by now, she follows it.

So Fine.

Cutie Pie.

It's True.

True Love.

She holds the heart that says *Only You* and rereads it as she pops the others into her mouth. She wonders if she's forgotten an anniversary or something because, even though he is the more romantic out of the two of them, this amount of romantic from Uzu rarely happens without it being a special occasion.

Stepping into the kitchen, two more candy hearts lay on the island. *ILU* and *Let's Kiss* stare up at her. Another one slides across the marble and her eyes flit up to find Uzu standing before her, a boyish smile adorning his face. She picks up the heart he slid her and, keeping her eyes on him, lifts it up to eye level.

Marry me.

Her eyes widen and immediately she looks back at Uzu, whose smile has turned sheepish and anxious. Her eyes flicker between the heart in her hand and the hopeful look and at length, she sets the heart down.

She pointedly ignores the way his face falls and instead searches the counter for the opened box of candy hearts she had spotted upon entering. Once finding it, she dumps out what's left of it and starts searching. Fingers curling around the one she wants, she turns back around. Uzu's expression has turned curious and he's leaning across the island to get a better look at what she's doing.

Ryuko holds out a closed hand and after a beat, he tentatively reaches forward, palm up. She deposits the heart and waits for his reaction.

I Do .

Uzu blinks and his head whips up, eyes wide and happy and full of adoration and love. She gives him a warm smile and simply holds

out another heart for him to take.

Kiss Me .

He doesn't need to be told twice.

as sweet as honeydukes

title: as sweet as honeydukes (now if only i could ask you out)

notes: This is definitely something I want to expand upon. But for now, Hogwarts!AU drabble.

Uzu fidgets nervously, peeking out from behind one of the trees surrounding the Black Lake and rubbing his sweating palms against the leg of his trousers. His eyes land on Ryuko, settled comfortably on the grass, with the sleeves of her button up rolled to her elbows and her tie loosened. Her shoes have been kicked off and her socks discarded and she's in the process of pulling up her hair and he gulps at the expanse of neck she's suddenly showing him.

"Okay, you can do this," he mutters to himself, rubbing his palms once more. Just walk up to her and ask her. That's all he has to do.

"Wow, you're pathetic."

Nonon appears beside him, sucking on a sugar quill and wearing the largest smirk he's seen to date. Behind her, Houka looks bored, but there's a glint of amusement in his eyes and he no doubt only followed his girlfriend just to see Uzu make a fool of himself.

"Shut up," he grunts, his face flushing red.

"It's really not that hard," Nonon says, absentmindedly handing half her quill to Houka. He pulls down the blue and silver scarf wrapped around his neck despite the heat and leans forward to take the proffered sweet. Uzu is both disgusted and jealous of them. "You just walk up to the girl and say, 'Let's go to Hogsmeade together'."

"You make it sound so easy."

"That's because it is."

Uzu grumbles under his breath and turns back to peek out from behind the tree again. There's a muttered "pathetic" behind him but he elects to ignore it. Ryuko's still sitting by the lake except Mako's joined her. His palms start sweating again and he goes to wipe them on his trousers once more.

"You know," Nonon says nonchalantly, "I hear the Transfiguration professor has a thing for her."

Uzu's ears immediately perk up as his fingers tighten against the bark.

"I heard he's waiting until she graduates to make his move."

"If you ask me, he should go for it. Monkey's obviously not going to."

"Of course you'd be all for the forbidden student-teacher relationship."

"Wouldn't you?"

Uzu pushes away from the tree and with a glare thrown over his shoulders at the smirking couple, stalks purposefully over to Ryuko. His steps falter as he nears and he starts to second guess his rash decision to ask her out, today of all days. He shakes himself out of his and his steps regain the confidence he doesn't feel.

Mako is the first to notice him. "Hello!"

Ryuko twists her upper body around and squints up at him and it makes his heart beat just that much faster and oh, dear Merlin, he knows his hands are probably sweating again. He reminds himself to take deep breaths and tries to calm his racing heart and keep the flush from spreading all over his face.

"Sanageyama," she greets.

"Matoi," he returns coolly only to start stammering. "Can I - er - that is - mind if I - you - we talk?"

Both girls blink at him owlishly, but it's Mako that catches on first. With a chuckle, she scurries off towards the castle with a quick 'see you later, Ryuko!' and Uzu finds he's both grateful and terrified with her departure. Now it's just him and Ryuko and the rest of Hogwarts that are still out here.

"Do you want to go somewhere -" Ryuko asks, trailing off uncertainly.

"No!" he says a little too quickly. Clearing his throat, he tries again. "I mean, here's fine. I don't - I don't think anyone's really listening to us."

"Alright."

He shifts uncomfortably from foot to foot, his mouth opening and closing soundlessly. After a long, awkward minute, he moves to sit beside her on the grass. His fingers immediately search out a flower and he plucks it, twirling the stem nervously.

"I -"

He can't seem to get the words out and his mouth is once again opening and closing soundlessly. The flower stops twirling and instead its petals get plucked one by one. Gathering his courage, he tries again.

"Er - that is -" he coughs and drops the now mangled flower, shifting so that he's now facing her. "The - uh - next weekend's a Hogsmeade weekend -" Oh Merlin, he thinks he's about to puke, but he barrels on because if he doesn't do it now he's never going to. "I was wondering, if you didn't have any plans, will you - er - would you - I mean, you don't have to -"

He pauses and draws in a deep breath to steady his racing heart. Ryuko hasn't moved nor has she made a sound, instead waiting patiently and curiously for him to finish. Except he's positive she already knows where this is going.

"Will you accompany me to Hogsmeade next weekend?" he ends up blurting out, face red and fingers twitching nervously against the fabric of his trousers as he waits for her answer.

She blinks and then her shoulders are shaking. She's laughing at him and if he wasn't so flustered he'd be hurt. Wait, no, actually, he is. He moves onto his knees and is ready to bolt when one of her hands rests lightly against his own. It makes him pause.

"Sure."

"S - sure?" he parrots.

Ryuko nods and it's then that he notices the light dusting of pink on her cheeks. "I'll meet you in the common room at one."

With that said, she scrambles to her feet, socks and shoes clutched in her hands. Hesitating, she dips back down and presses a soft kiss to his cheek and immediately scurries towards the castle barefooted. Dumbfounded, Uzu can only watch her leave, one of his hands coming up numbly to press against the spot where her lips had touched him.

When it finally sinks in that *he's got a date with Ryuko*, a wide grin spreads across his face and Uzu does a little fist pump of victory. His euphoric high is immediately shattered by Nonon's voice cutting through the air.

"Fucking finally."

hook, line, and not-quite-sinker

title: hook, line, and not-quite-sinker

notes: Part 2 of the Mer!Uzu saga.

It's been a little over three months since she first pulled Uzu out of the sea like the fresh catch of the day and since then, they've met no less than twenty times. Granted, at least half of those visits happen because he gets caught in her nets.

This time around, he's the one that finds her. She's docked off the shore of an uncharted island and she's about to haul up her anchor when she hears the sound of something clearly not waves battering the side of her ship. Leaning over, she finds him grinning up at her.

"What do you want?" she calls out.

"Can't I visit?"

Ryuko shifts her weight so that she can lean further over the side of the ship without crushing her breasts and arches a brow. "Are you caught in my net?"

"No." He sounds so indignant that it makes her laugh. "I actually have something for you."

"Oh?"

"You, uh," he gestures loosely at her anchor, "want to maybe pull me up?"

"Do I have a choice?"

"No, not really."

With a sigh, Ryuko pushes away and returns to reeling up her anchor. Uzu comes up with it and slithers onto her deck. Ryuko doesn't bother telling him how much of a pain it is to wipe merman slime from polished wood it is.

This is the first time Ryuko's seen him with his hair pulled back, tied off with a strand of seaweed, and it's the first time she manages a good look at his eyes. They're the kind of grey one would see in storm clouds, but they twinkle with amusement.

"Here."

He grabs a hold of one her hands, turns it so that her palm is facing up, and presses an oyster into her hand. She blinks blankly, once, twice, thrice, before drawing her hand away and holding it up to the sunlight.

"What is this?"

"An oyster."

"I didn't know," she deadpans. "Why are you giving it to me?"

He shrugs and says nothing else. With a sigh, Ryuko stalks across the deck and into her cabin, rummaging through her desk for something sharp enough to pry open the shell. She finds a pocket knife and returns to the deck where Uzu's waiting as she fiddles with trying to wedge the tip of the knife between the shells.

With a pop, the oyster opens and Ryuko finds herself staring at a tiny pearl, resting innocently in the middle. The first thought that comes to mind is, "I wonder how much I can sell this for."

"What?"

Ryuko picks up the pearl to examine it closer. "It's pretty small, but I think I know someone who'll pay a hefty sum of money for this."

"You're not going to keep it?" Uzu asks, voice suddenly strained.

Ryuko looks at him like he's crazy. "Of course not. What would I even do with it?"

"Turn it into jewelry?" he suggests.

Ryuko scoffs and places the pearl back where she found it and sets the oyster onto a nearby barrel. "In case you haven't noticed, Uzu, I don't wear jewelry."

"But you don't have to sell it."

"I could do with the extra money."

Uzu groans and throws his hands up into the air in frustration. He slithers back onto the side of the ship and with a glare over his shoulder, mutters, "See if I ever scour the ocean floor for you again."

Ryuko blinks as he dives back into the ocean and by the time she strides across the deck, there's no trace of him anywhere. Her eyebrows furrow and she asks no one in particular, "What was that all about?"

(early) morning wake up call

title: (early) morning wake up call

notes: Wow, it's been so long since I last posted anything. I need to get back into the groove of writing for KKK. I think it's time for an apartment neighbors AU kind of things. I would also like to thank everyone who's favorited, followed, and/or reviewed this drabble collection. They really make my day.

A knock filters through her sleep addled brain and Ryuko's jerked from a rather interesting dream of pop-up cardboard cartoon characters and tennis rackets and she thinks there might have been coconuts involved. But that's not the point.

She angles her head towards the general vicinity of her front door and waits, hoping that the knock was imagined and not that there was someone at her door. When it doesn't happen again in the next few seconds, she sighs sleepily and burrows her face back into her pillow, intent on falling back asleep. But one more sharp, jarring knock pulls her back.

With a groan, she tosses off her covers and pads across the carpeted floors, nearly tripping over a box half cleaned out from yesterday. She turns on the lights and blinks as her eyes adjust. She yawns, hand ruffling her hair, and throws open her door.

"Can I help you?"

Uzu stands awkwardly in the bright hallway lights and scratches uncomfortably at his neck. "Hi. Yeah. Um, I'm your neighbor."

Ryuko sighs, leaning against her doorframe, arms crossed over her chest in an effort to hide the fact that she's not wearing a bra. This was not how she imagined her first meeting with her new neighbors

would go. She's sure if it was any other time, she probably would have found this amusing. But as it stands, it's five in the morning - five twenty-two if her microwave's to be believed - and she's tired, so it's really not that amusing.

Nevertheless, she answers, "Hi. Can I help you?"

"Yeah, sorry," he fidgets, removing his hand and gestures loosely down the hall to what she assumes is his door. "I kind of locked myself out of my apartment."

She doesn't know what she's supposed to say. "I'm sorry?"

"Yeah, no, I'm an idiot. But I think I left my balcony unlocked and I was wondering if I could use yours to climb over to mine."

She could argue and protest and decline, but she takes one look at his pitiful state and sighs, pushing off the frame and moving aside so he could step in. He shoots her a grateful smile and makes his way in, pausing at the edge of her carpet as though debating whether it was okay to walk on it with shoes on. Making an impatient noise, Ryuko spurs him on.

She follows him to the balcony, both to make sure he gets into his apartment okay and to make sure he's not actually a creep who's not really going to leave. She watches him, eyes following his movements as he crawls over the railing and inches his way towards his, and asks, "Does this happen often?"

He pauses, perched precariously in the space between their two balconies, and angles his head back to glance at her. "What?"

"This," she elaborates, gesturing to him. "Getting locked out."

"Yeah."

"Oh."

With a huff, Uzu swings across and lands on his balcony. Ryuko leans against the railing and now that sleep is slowly seeping out of her and she's moderately more awake than she was before, she's noticing that her neighbor has a really nice body with such broad shoulders and lean muscles and a pretty cute butt to boot.

A throat clears and she brings her eyes up to his smirking expression that's belied by the light flush that dusts his cheek. He's somehow jimmied open his balcony door - or maybe it was already unlocked, she's not entirely sure - and he's standing inside his apartment now. One of his hands makes its way back to the back of his neck as he regards her.

"Well," she drawls, easing back off her elbows.

"Well," he parrots. "Er - thanks for letting me use your balcony."

"No problem."

"So I'll see you around?"

Ryuko shrugs noncommittally. "Maybe."

"Cool." He grins, entirely too brightly considering how early it is, and ducks back into his own apartment, the glass door sliding shut, and then it's just Ryuko. After a moment, she yawns and remembers that sleep is a good thing.

As she heads back inside, she thinks that, early morning aside, she just might like living here.

let's make a man

title: let's make a man

notes: Mulan!AU. The use of male pronouns for Ryuko is intentional.

Uzu grunts, his breath getting knocked out of his body, as Ryu parries his punch and gives a powerful roundhouse kick to the head. He manages to block with his arm, but not quick enough. It glances the side of his head and the force of the blow sends him to the ground, temple throbbing. He blinks, stars dancing in front of his eyes, and in shock that one of the new recruits was able to have him flat on his back.

Ryu stands over him, breathing hard but otherwise okay, with a look of awe and smugness gracing his features. "Woah."

Uzu ends up chuckling despite himself and rubs delicately at his temple. It smarts and it'll bruise tomorrow, but damn, he got him good. "Not bad."

Ryu offers hand to help him up and he graciously accepts, allowing himself to get pulled back to his feet. He finds it rather odd that Ryu has such smooth hands for a guy, but he's not one to question such things if it means they're skilled in combat.

"So captain, what'd you think?"

"A few more years and you might just make it to the frontlines," Uzu teases. His smirk falls into a reassuring smile as he places a hand on Ryu's shoulder. "I think you'll do great."

Ryu grins and it does something strange to Uzu, but he quickly shakes it off because this is *Ryu*, for crying out loud. Ryu, his subordinate. Ryu, the guy who just kicked him in the head. Ryu, the

guy who, up until now, was unable to command any respect from him. Ryu, the guy who -

Uzu shakes his head to clear his thoughts. He's thinking too much into it. Respect, that's what it is. It's the feeling of respect that has heat blooming in his cheeks and certainly not because Ryu looks real good all fired up and determined or anything like that. Definitely not.

Ryu's hesitant question cuts through Uzu's thoughts. "Captain? Are you okay?"

This time the flush that appears is out of embarrassment and not because Ryu looks rather adorable with concern etched over his face. Of course not. Straightening out, Uzu nods and reties his sash, mostly to keep his hands busy because otherwise he fears he's going to try to reach out and touch Ryu again. "I'm fine. Let's take a water break and then we'll resume."

"Yes, sir."

Uzu sighs as Ryu turns to leave. He breathes in deeply, one of his hands coming up to run wearily down his face. He cracks open an eye and accidentally catches a glimpse of Ryu's butt. He admires it for but a moment before he realizes exactly what he doing and his eyes widen in horror.

Only one word runs through his mind. *Shit* .

we'd be in the negatives

title: we'd be in the negatives if that were possible

notes: Hogwarts AU part 2! This is primarily HouNon and features no Ryuko or Uzu.

It starts as most things between them do. It starts with them running into each other.

Nonon just wants to get to her room as fast as possible. The incoming weather is everything she hates and more. Rain, biting winds, and the chill in the air that preludes the inevitable onset of winter.

A cold draft from behind her prompts her to pick up her pace. She bounds down the stairs two steps at a time until she hits the dungeon corridor that leads to the Syltherin common room.

She can't wait to marvel in its warmth.

She notices too late the figure exiting the Potions classroom until she runs head first into them and sends them both sprawling. The impact is unpleasant. Her palms and her knees slam into ground in an effort to brace herself and her forehead slams into their chin. Whoever's under her swears.

"Watch where you're going," she grumbles, picking herself up.

"I could say the same for you."

She freezes. She knows that voice. That insufferable voice that belongs to that insufferable dog. For the first time since colliding, she takes a look at exactly *whom* she had struck. Houka Inumuta, Ravenclaw Prefect and a pain in her ass, on the ground being straddled by her, his glasses askew and hair mussed and chin red.

"In case you couldn't tell," she snaps, scrambling to her feet, "I was in a rush."

"Oh, I could tell," he says. "Five points from Slytherin for running in the halls."

"And five from Ravenclaw for sprawling in the middle of the halls."

He quirks an eyebrow. "Another five for *running into* a person."

Nonon wants to refute that with another deduction from Ravenclaw, she really does. But a part of her grudgingly admits that she's at fault here. Besides, there's a cold draft sweeping through the hall. Her need for warmth is currently outweighing her need to put Houka in his place.

"Fine."

"Fine?" he parrots, clearly not expecting her to give up so easily.

"Fine," she tosses over her shoulder. "I'll just deal with you later."

Later, as it turns out, is three days later. She's in the library trying to find this blasted book on merpeople when she spots his telltale hair slipping out of the Restricted Area. Grinning to herself, Nonon abandons her quest and instead follows after him.

She somehow manages to sneak up on him and whispers in his ear, "Five points from Ravenclaw for being where they're not supposed to."

Houka jumps but manages to cover his surprise rather well. She's mildly impressed. "I don't know what you mean."

She clicks her tongue at him disapprovingly. "Another five for *lying* to a Prefect."

"It's not lying if it's true," he says blithely.

"And if that's true then you're a dog's ass."

It's his turn to click his tongue at her. "Five points from Slytherin for being *rude* to a Prefect."

"I was merely criticizing your personality," she says loftily.

"Then I suppose it's five points from Slytherin for *criticizing* a Prefect's personality."

"And I suppose it's five from Ravenclaw for withholding information from a Prefect rather than lying."

"Pray tell, what information do you think I'm withholding?"

"Why you were in the Restricted Area, for example."

He leans in close, so close that it makes her crossed-eyed, and whispers conspiratorially, "Don't you want to know what Hogwarts doesn't want us to know?"

"So you admit to being where you shouldn't be."

"Of course not," he says. "I am innocent until proven guilty."

"You're about as innocent as a weasel."

"More innocent than you."

"No one is more innocent than me."

"Whatever helps you sleep at night."

She snarls at his retreating back, irritated that he got in the last word, but his retreat reminds her that she still needs to find that book. She decides to give him this win. After all, it's the only one he's going to get for a long time.

As the year wears on, they continue to deduct points from each other. Sometimes, it's reasonable. And sometimes, just because. At some point, Nonon thinks around the start of Christmas break, the two of them stop pretending that they ever deduct for legitimate reason and just begin arbitrarily taking points every time they meet.

They include:

- eating too many sugar quills
- having blue hair
- that sharp tongue of hers
- that dull wit of his

and

- being under five-foot tall.

Nonon calculates that between the two of them, they've lost their houses at least a hundred and fifty points each, if not more.

Their respective houses hate them. They complain, constantly and loudly, about how they have to work twice as hard to make up for the lost points and oh, did they know, Hufflepuff's in the lead for House Cup. Hufflepuff.

Neither of them care.

"At some point you two *will* run out of points to deduct," Satsuki points out.

Nonon shrugs. "Then our houses aren't doing their jobs properly."

"We can only earn so many points so fast."

"Not my problem."

Satsuki's right. They run out of points.

The two of them stand before the hourglasses and stare at the despairingly empty lower halves so reminiscent of the first day of school. Except it's not the first day back.

"I suppose we overdid it," Houka muses. Nonon grudgingly agrees.

"I'm not giving you any points," she's quick to say.

"And here I was hoping," he deadpans.

"If you had any points left, I would have taken five off for thinking so highly of me."

"Is that so wrong?"

His tone makes her pause. It's not his usual drawl, so full of smugness and taunting and condescending. It's none of that and it's weird. She doesn't like it.

"What?"

"Is it so wrong to think highly of you?" he repeats.

"Yes."

"And why is that?"

"Because it's you," she reasons. "You don't think highly of *anyone* except Satsuki."

He sighs and this conversation is so normal, so without their usual banter that it throws her for a loop. Nonon doesn't understand what's going on. She can't read the look on his face and it scares her, because she's always been able to read him.

"I am only going to say this once," he says. "You are quite possibly the only person other than Satsuki that I think highly of."

"While I suppose I'm glad you seem to have me on such a pedestal, what possessed you to put me there in the first place?"

"I must admit, your wit plays a large part."

"Glad to know my wit can charm dogs."

"I suppose you can say that."

She can't handle this. He's admitting that she *charms* him and he's *not supposed to agree with her*. They rarely agree on anything, but this isn't supposed to be one of those rare times. "Did someone confound you?"

"You would like that, wouldn't you."

"Yes. Very much."

"Unfortunately for you, I have not been confounded."

"So you are aware of admitting to the fact that I charm you."

"Yes." He sighs and mutters, "If *you* had any points left, I'd take away five for being obtuse."

"What a charmer," she deadpans. "I'm swooning."

"I can show you just how charming I can be."

Nonon tries not to think of the implication behind his words. "I've seen enough of your charms to last me a lifetime."

"I'm asking you out."

She points to the large double doors of the Entrance Hall. "The door's right there."

"On a date."

It's hard to pretend his words don't mean exactly what they mean when they're out in the open like that. She blinks, speechless around him for the first time since meeting him on the Hogwarts Express five years ago.

"Next weekend," he continues.

"And if I say no?"

"You won't," he says.

She bristles at how confident he sounds. "And why is that?"

"Because I clearly charm you."

"You're blinder than I thought."

"Call it a dog's intuition."

She stares at him. There's no way he can actually be asking her out. This must be some elaborate hoax. But despite the banter that filled the latter half of their conversation, none of it held the usual bite that colored all their previous exchanges.

Maybe, she thinks, he might just be serious about this.

"Fine," she ultimately acquiesces. "But only to prove that you don't charm me."

Houka smiles, a genuine smile that, if Nonon's willing to admit, leaves her breathless. Maybe he *does* charm her, just a bit.

"Five points to Slytherin for finally coming to her senses."

Scratch that. He definitely does *not* charm her.